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## Transit Spending AWOL; [FINAL Edition]

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Happily, the debate about the intercounty connector finally has moved from need to cost. Even Marc Fisher has acknowledged that the road is intended to "ease the crunch for current residents" and is not for new development [Metro, March 17].

But let's add some financial perspective. The former state transportation secretary testified in Annapolis recently that the cost of the Baltimore Harbor Tunnel, calculated in 2005 dollars, would equal today's estimate for the intercounty connector.

Montgomery County contributes more than 20 percent of the state's overall revenue and deserves a fair share in return.

The problem is that transportation slips to the end of the list during budget battles. Two years ago the state diverted \$233 million in highway-user revenue -- money paid in gas taxes, vehicle registration fees and the like and **intended** for infrastructure -- to general government. A similar cut is being considered this year.

The intercounty connector is a handy distraction from the real question -- what happened to responsible government spending on much-needed transportation improvements across Maryland such as increased transit opportunities, more road resurfacing and maintenance, bridge repairs, and preservation of street trees?

Mr. Fisher should write a column about that.

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